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**QUOIN**

## Leveraging Technology to Better Manage Projects and Business

Using the right software tools can make huge differences to your overall efficiency and bottom-line.



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With the diverse offering of software applications currently available to help companies run projects and their overall business, it's no wonder that a majority are confused about what solutions exist, let alone how to best apply this technology. Many companies fall into the trap of utilizing a host of stand-alone systems and supporting various custom applications or using generic product-based systems. Utilizing these stand-alone applications for areas such as facilities management, project management, business development, customer relationship management (CRM), and back office management without having them integrated creates a fragmented environment for your business, making it difficult and costly to manage and track the health and profitability of your company and its projects.

### Integration vs. Fragmentation

Separately, the systems themselves are capable of managing parts of your business or projects. However, what is often lacking is the ability for the systems to integrate and seamlessly share data and work together. This fragmented approach leads to multiple systems, duplication of infor-

“This new system is allowing us to streamline internal systems to improve efficiency and lower the overhead costs passed on to clients. It also provides our project managers with the most technologically advanced project management system which will allow them to more carefully track project budgets and schedules and make better decisions to keep clients' projects on track.”

— Gordon MacDonald, PE, Vice President of SSOE

mation and labor and time-intensive manual efforts when managing your project-based business.

As a company grows and takes on new projects, new offices and new employees, it may be at risk for losing information, adding yet more systems and wasting time with multiple forms of data entry and reporting. Needless to say, this approach costs time, money, and the ability to continue to grow efficiently.

### SSOE: A Case Study

SSOE, an international architectural and engineering firm with 18 offices around the world (offering services which include facility management and procurement) recently completed a major software implementation to support its business which is growing at a rate of over

25% a year. The company selected the enterprise software application product called Vision (produced by Deltek) due to its need to focus on applications designed specifically for project-based businesses. It deliberately sought and chose a software solution that combined project planning, financial management and project monitoring (where it had previously used different software for each function), and now has a single database providing complete and real-time insight into the status and health of each project as well as its overall business operations.

Because of the integrated design and project-focused nature of the software solution, greater visibility between the company's various divisions, worldwide employees, projects, and clients al-

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lows for processes to be developed to maintain and use critical information on a global level. For example, work sharing between the US and China on projects with multiple resources is now much more efficient. The software's multi-currency functionality allows for corporate reporting with a global view; resource planning accesses integrated employee information and feeds directly into project management; opportunities, plans, and ultimately the projects are all linked and available to support reporting and analysis for CRM, accounting, project management and executive initiatives. SSOE also implemented automatic interfaces which link the human resources and payroll systems with the software to support the integration of employee information with CRM, project, and resource management.

Implementing a project-based software solution has made SSOE more efficient in its administrative tasks as well as its overall projects and business plans; it has seen an immediate and positive return on its investment. The ability to have a single database, accessible at anytime anywhere through a web browser has proven critical, and has greatly facilitated the company's hiring and assimilation of over 200 new employees in three new offices in the past year. The company's executives now have a real-time, dashboard view of all projects, staffing issues, marketing, sales and clients. The project managers are now able to distill all the layers of a project into mean-

ingful reports, giving as much or as little detail as needed, and allowing them much more time to manage and lead projects and the devotion of less time to 'crunching numbers'. In short, the integrated software has delivered timely information in real-time and in greater depth. Ultimately, the managers have been able to spot trends and address issues faster, saving both the company and its clients time and money.

#### Other Benefits

"For an organization of 1,000 people in 18 locations to undertake this kind of conversion in a year and a half is a formidable task. One of the largest resulting changes the staff at SSOE has noticed is that communication and collaboration have been greatly increased - from simply learning how to work better together to achieve a common goal to being able to use the software as a tool to stay connected to projects and people through real-time work sharing.

Whether yours is a 5,000 or a 5 person firm, the benefits of having real-time insight into projects and business (managed through a single database) can be critical to success. Examine the size and scope of the information to which you need access, the flexibility and implementation requirements of the software you are considering, its ability to focus on the specific needs of your project-based business and consider the time and ease involved in implementation of the application. It will be time well spent. ■

# John Hancock

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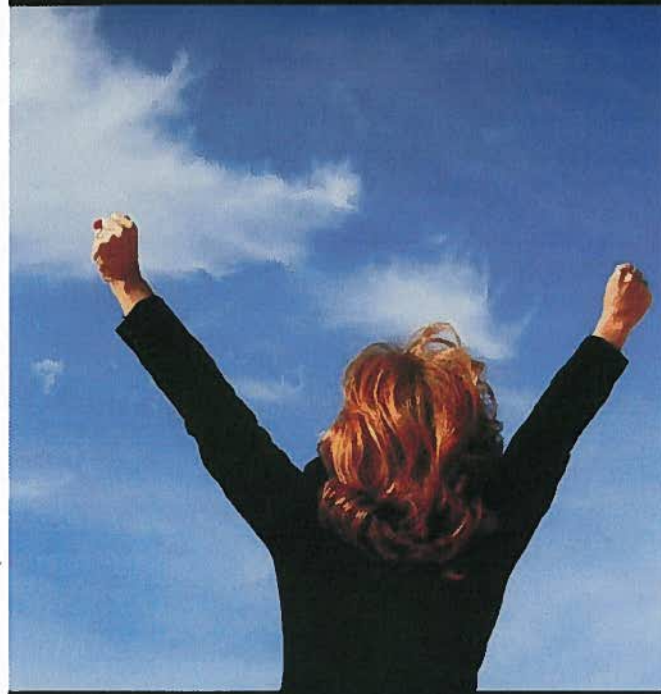
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